

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

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SECDEF WASHDC

INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCUSAFERAMSTEIN AFB

USNMR SHAPE

USCINCEUR

USLOSACLANT NORFOLK VA

USDELMC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 1972

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, BE

SUBJECT: AWACS AND F-16

REF : COPENHAGEN 617

1. WE ARE FULLY AWARE OF IMPORTANCE OF AWACS PROGRAM TO BOTH
US AND WESTERN EUROPEAN AIR DEFENSES. WE ALSO KNOW IMPORTANCE
OF GETTING WIDE SUPPORT FOR THIS PROGRAM FROM NATO COUNTRIES.
OUR IMMEDIATE CONCERN OVER THE EFFORTS UNDERTAKEN TO CONVINCE
NATO COUNTRIES OF THE NEED FOR AN AWACS BEGINNING OVER A YEAR
AGO, IS THAT THESE NOT JEOPARDIZE OUR CURRENT EFFORTS TO GET
BELGIAN GOVERNMENT TO SELECT THE F-16.

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2. ASIDE FROM THE QUESTION OF WHICH AIRCRAFT BELGIUM WILL SELECT TO REPLACE ITS F-104GS, IS THE CURRENT HOT PUBLIC DEBATE HERE OVER WHETHER BELGIUM SHOULD BUY ANY PLANE. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE SENTIMENT IN BELGIUM, NOT LIMITED TO RADICAL LEFTIST GROUPS, AGAINST SPENDING GREAT SUMS OF MONEY FOR ANY NEW COMBAT AIRCRAFT, WHICH, THE ARGUMENT RUNS, WILL NEVER BE USED.

3. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT SOME ASPECTS OF USG EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF AWACS COULD HINDER OUR IMMEDIATE EFFORTS TO SELL THE F-16 TO THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT AND FURTHER UNDERMINE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO CONVINCE THE BELGIAN PUBLIC OF THE NEED FOR ACQUIRING REPLACEMENTS FOR ITS F-104GS. WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE TO KEEP AWACS OUT OF THE LOCAL PRESS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE UNTIL BELGIUM MAKES ITS FINAL F-104 REPLACEMENT DECISION. APRIL AWACS STATIC DISPLAY AT BRUSSELS AIRPORT (ABELAG) AND SEEK BUS DISPLAY AT SHAPE CANNOT BE HIDDEN ENTIRELY. US SHOULD AT BOTH LOCATIONS BE PREPARED TO ANSWER PRESS QUESTIONS WITH BRIEF FACTUAL MATERIAL EMPHASIZING NATO (NOT US) ASPECTS OF PROGRAM. FIRESTONE

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